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OF
LATIN-AMERICAN
GOVERNMENTS

AND THE
EMPIRICISM OF THEIR RELATIONS

WITH THE
UNITED STATES

BY
MANUEL GAMIO

MEXICO
IMPRENTA NACIONAL, S. A.
AV. URUGUAY NUM. 41
1919

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November 6, 1922, L. CORY

[Reprinted from Mexican Review. Vol. III. No 5.
August 1919. Mexico]

EMPIRICISM
OF LATIN-AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS
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RELATIONS WITH THE
UNITED STATES

By MANUEL GAMIO
Director of the Anthropological Board.

THIS article was written for the Twentieth Congress of Americanists which should have been held at Rio Janeiro, Brazil, during the month of June, 1919, but which on account of various reasons was deferred for the year 1920.

The larger part of the Latin-American peoples have never been able to constitute real nations; a deficient exploitation of their natural resources, a marked backwardness of their culture, economic disturbances, long suffered despotic governments or constant domestic strifes, these and other unfavorable phenomena which are a hindrance to the development of the population have succeeded one another without interruption for various centuries, and consequently the creation of social prosperity and the formation of nationality have been impossible. On the other hand, up North, in the United States, just the opposite was recorded, for although the colonization of the territory was even more slow than in the southern countries, the Nation was soon made and the fatherland formed, and the general prosperity was very rapidly won. No despotic govern-

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ments have ever got hold of the northern people, and they had just one civil war, which instead of producing the long periods of turmoil as are wonted to disturb us, brought about more liberty and created prosperity. What is the cause of such failure on the part of the peoples of Spanish, Portuguese and Indian origin of America, and what the reason for the contrasting victorius achievements of the Anglo-Saxon of the same Continent?

The prejudices of intellectual inferiority or superiority of such or such races in regard to others have already been discarded, and therefore we reject them at once to explain the above question. Nor can the remarkable contrast alluded to be attributed to a difference of physical strength or power of endurance between the peoples of the North and those of the South, because the physical conditions of the southern population, the indigenous race very specially, are not comparatively inferior to those of the northern people. A good lot has been said of the cultural decadence of our European ancestry as an explanation of our actual state of inferiority, but such argument is very questionable, since all the foreign elements which founded our hybrid population of today came from a nation which at that time was in the highest degree of cultural grandeur, wealth and power, and these advantageous conditions reflected upon some of its colonial possessions, as New Spain for instance, which soon became the first educational center of America. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that the majority of the population in the countries we refer to in these lines is of the Indigenous race, and such argument could not, therefore, be applied to them even though it were true. The natural wealth of the United States is not

enough either to explain the dominating and marvelous development of the Anglo-Saxon population, for the soil of America is providentially rich and production from Alaska down to Patagonia.

For these and other reasons and opinions rather prolix to enumerate, well-meaning governments—the first being that of the Great Bolivar—undertook to redeem our countries by dragging them out of the state of numbness in which they lay and to avoid the inveterate uneasiness they suffer. Most unfortunately the results have been little or not satisfactory. We go on living always so frail, so disorientated, decaying and pauper, whereas the United States grows each day more powerful, healthier, richer and happier.

The Latin-American countries have almost always shown a visible sentiment of distrust and a more or less veiled animosity toward the United States. Well justified reasons of the past explain such feelings in some of the southern countries, as Mexico, Colombia, Nicaragua and others for instance; but there are some other reasons entirely unjust which in a large part give birth to such sentiments. One of them consists in the natural, human, unavoidable disgust which are produced in a poor, weak and worried man by seeing his neighbor strong, rich and happy. We Latin-Americans are the **weak man**. The North-Americans are the **strong man**. Another not less important reason, perhaps even more, is the following: If we Latin-Americans do not know ourselves, if we do not know our own necessities and the means to meet them, if we cannot find our way to Damascus, why should we expect that the North Americans know us better and find the adequate means to make us as rich and happy as they are, to draw us together, to create a mutual

understanding and love between us? Now then, insofar as there is no sincere comprehension and a positive convergence of ideals and interests of the Latin and the Saxon-Americans, it may be easy and most probable that the ill-feelings shall grow either visibly or in secret, until there shall be no human power able to prevent their explosion in a disastrous conflict. The sound judgment and just endeavors of President Wilson have done much during the last six years of activity to prevent the possibility of a conflict, and perhaps such conflict may become impossible in the future, thanks to the League of Nations. However, since it is certain that the said League will ignore the very peculiar conditions of the character and the existence of the Latin-American countries, for even in the Pan-American Congress such conditions have been totally ignored, it seems to be momentous that new orientations be adopted tending to make the Latin-American peoples know themselves and make the United States know them better.

If the means resorted to by the Latin-Americans for over one century to know themselves better and to redeem their population have been a failure up to the present; if no real and tangible success has been achieved by the means used by the United States to create a profitable and sincere understanding between North and South Americans on account of the total lack of mutual knowledge, why not walk in different paths and adopt new ideas?

In our opinion a large part of the great development actually obtained by the United States is originally due to their racial homogeneity and to the unity of their culture, their ideas, habits, customs and language. The North Americans are bound

to one another by ethnical affinities founded in their common Caucasian origin. The Indians, insignificant in number, and the colored people which amount to several millions, are fatally condemned to be absorbed by the white population. As to culture—that is, as to ethic, aesthetic and religious ideas, to ambitions, ideals and national institutions, to customs and usages, etc.—a surprising cohesion and uniformity are observed. In fact he who has lived in the gigantic New York and in the meanest town of Texas, can detect, here and there, and everywhere hardly hidden under superficial differences, the same American spirit, unmistakable, unique, typical. The unanimous, admirable and powerful effort of all the American social groups hastening to give their share during the recent war offers a most eloquent testimony of the unity of national feeling.

Finally, the exchange of views among Americans is made through the English language, more or less characterized by its phonetics and grammatical peculiarities in each region of the country, but always comprehensible and utilizable for the whole population.

Well then, such national unity of so many facets undoubtedly constitutes the main principle, the fundamental basis of the American success.

On the other hand, the failure of our Latin-American countries is explained by the heterogeneity of race which implies an ethnical strangeness of the white inhabitants in regard to the natives; the reluctance dividing them is positive, undeniable, and can be detected under any disguise; we all know how carefully one must use the word "Indian" when applying it to a Latin-American, white or mixed, for he usually takes great offense at it.

In regard to ideas, customs, ambitions, etc., there is such a great divergence among the various groups forming the population of these countries, that when the inhabitants of a region move to another within the same country they find such a diversity of customs and ways of living that they feel as though they were in a foreign country. (1). The language does also constitute a serious hindrance for social approximation, because the coexistence of Spanish and Portuguese with numberless Indian dialects and languages makes difficult, if not impossible, the communication among the diverse communities forming each country.

May the public welfare be achieved, the nationality be formed and the common fatherland be constituted in countries lacking national unity? Undoubtedly no.

Now then, if we are to try the difficult and slow task of the ethnical-linguistic-cultural unification of our populations, it is indispensable, as I said before, to previously get acquainted with them, but not merely to get an indirect, superficial and empirical knowledge of them, but to study them scientifically and by personal experiences. On the other hand, by getting acquainted with the Latin-American peoples the North Americans shall be able to devise the only and true means they must resort to in order to attain a sincere and equitable Pan-American understanding.

In the book entitled "Forjando Patria" published by the undersigned in 1917, (2)

(1) In Mexico, for instance, going from Tlaxcala to Yucatán; in Ecuador going from Imbabura to Esmeraldas; in Colombia from Cauca to Cartagena.

(2) "Forjando Patria," Pro-Nationalism; M. Gamio, Mexico, 1916.

as well as in the articles entitled "Revisión de las Constituciones Latino-Americanas" ("Revising the Latin American Constitutions") and "El Instituto Antropológico Central de México" ("The Central Anthropological Institute of Mexico") (1), written for the second Pan-American Scientific Congress at Washington, he submitted to the consideration of the Congress several arguments on this topic. Later on, in 1918, he gave a concrete form, within a strict method, to various propositions in the "Program of the Anthropological Institute" (formerly known as Bureau of Archeologic and Ethnographic Studies") (2). Distinguished Americanists, Messrs. Frederick Starr and Philip Ainsworth Means among them, designed to approve and give their enthusiastic support to this new conception of Americanism, and we might quote their articles "The Mexican Situation—Manuel Gamio's Program," written by the former, and "Race Appreciation in Latin America," "Race Appreciation and Democracy," and "Race Society in the Andean Countries," (3) written by the lat-

(1) "Proceedings of the II Pan American Scientific Congress." Washington, 1917.—Pages 374 and 375.—Section I.—Anthropology.—Col. I.

(2) Program of the Board of Archeological and Ethnographic Studies," Department of Agriculture and "Fomento." Mexico, 1917.

(3) "The Mexican Situation: Manuel Gamio's Program." Frederick Starr. The American Journal of Sociology.—Vol. XXIV.—No. 2.—Sept. 8th. N. Y. "Race Appreciation in Latin America. "Philip Ainsworth Means. Science,

ter. The Latin and the North American press also accepted the new conception with lively interest (1.)

Once these antecedents have been disclosed let us make a concrete statement of the two propositions constituting the conclusive part of our thesis.

The Acquaintance of the Latin-American Countries With Themselves.

It is a pressing necessity to undertake the study of our population and to investigate the practical means to have our governments remedy the necessities and satisfy the ambitions of our several peoples, and endeavor to unify them. This has to be done in accordance with the social sciences, the application of which has been always disregarded by our statesmen and rulers. Only then shall our peoples possess

(1) "Revista Jurídica y de Ciencias Sociales." Buenos Aires, Argentina. "El Magisterio Ecuatoriano." Año I, Num. 12.—Feb. 1918.—Vol. 34. "La Revista del Mundo." New York, August, 1916. July to Sept. 1918.

new Series. Vol. XLVII. Friday, Sept. 13th, 1918. "Race Appreciation and Democracy." The same author. Reprinted from the Journal of Race Development. Vol. 9. Num. 2. October, 1918. "Race and Society in the Andean Countries." The same author. Reprinted from "The Hispanic American Historical Review." Vol. I. Num. 4. November, 1918.

the prosperity they are entitled to and shall be authorizedly governed, while armed force and governmental empiricism shall be automatically abolished—the only laws which unfortunately have ruled for a long time the destinies of Latin America.

Mexico took already the first steps to that end, as proven by the fact that the President of the Republic and the Secretary of Agriculture and Promotion (Fomento) have approved and given their official support to the realization of the "Program of the Antropological Bureau," formed by the undersigned and already developed in almost all its parts as regards the inhabitants of the Valley of Teotihuacan. (1)

Considering that it may be timely to make known the essential part of said program, let us insert it herein:

"Our population, especially that of the indigenous race, has remained unknown up to the present time in its most transcendental aspects, and therefore it has been deficiently ruled, for one cannot govern logically what one does not know, and of course the development of the population is necessarily defective and abnormal as a logical consequence of the empirical governmental system which has prevailed for a long time.

"Our extensive territory does not offer the regular geographical, biological and climatic conditions which in other countries have existed and helped to the formation of populations which are ethnically, culturally and linguistically homogeneous, but on the contrary, many and very dif-

(1) This article was finished and will be published in the course of the present year.

ferent regional conditions contribute very strongly to give a great variety to the Mexican population.

“Our people are not indeed homogeneous, but heterogeneous and dissimilar, since their various elements differ among themselves in historical antecedents, racial characteristics, the aspects of their material and intellectual culture and even in the expression each element makes of its ideas by means of several dialects and languages.

“In short, it may be stated, with all justice, that the Mexican population is an aggregate of regional peoples, little known, abnormally developed, and more or less different to each other, this depending on the degree of difference and divergence of their innate actual characteristics, of the geographical, climatic and geological conditions of the regions where they live, and on their racial, cultural and linguistic antecedents.

“In view of the above considerations, it has seemed convenient to concrete as transcendental tendencies of the Bureau, the following: First: The gradual acquisition of knowledge referring to the racial characteristics, the manifestations of material and intellectual culture, the dialects and languages, the economic situation and the physical and biologic conditions of the actual and future regional peoples of the Republic. Second.—The investigation of the adequate methods to promote the actual economic, physical and intellectual development of said peoples. Third.—To prepare the racial approximation, the cultural union, the unity of language and the economic equilibrium of such peoples, since only by such means can they be led to form a coherent and well defined nationality and a true country.

“What program shall be followed in the

study of our regional peoples according to such tendencies? The ethnical, cultural, linguistic and historical diversity offered by such peoples as well as the great difference there is in the geographic and biologic conditions of the regions they inhabit forbid us to establish a unique program to be used in studying them all, and therefore it seems more logical to form several programs, one corresponding to each type of the said regional peoples.

"The first regional people this Bureau has undertaken to study is formed by 10,000 inhabitants of the Valley of Teotihuacan, and it may be considered as a representative type of the regional peoples of the Central Plateau. The plan for the investigations effected is as follows:

"The Geographic Environment.

"The Biological Environment.

"The Pre-Hispanic Population.

"The Colonial Population.

"The Population of the XIX Century.

"Biological, Social, Ethnical, Cultural, Linguistic and Economic conditions of the actual population."

"Means authorized to promote the convenient economic, physical and intellectual development of the actual population.

One of the main difficulties met in making these investigations is that at present we have in our country a very small number of specialists, sociologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, linguists, etc., etc., and it is almost impossible to give special courses on such matters because there are very few efficient teachers. This deficiency is easily explained, for we have never given any means of livelihood to such specialists and therefore they have been compelled to devote only secondary activities to investigations in order to devote their main efforts to more profitable undertakings. These

obstacles may be met by sending young Latin-Americans to European and North American scientific centers where they shall take up with great profit, the special studies alluded to, if they are properly prepared for it, in three or four years. (1)

In accordance with these views the Mexican Government endeavors to perform an effectual task in various national scientific institutions such as the National University, the National Museum and the Anthropological Bureau, even though it is fully realized that the special courses of such educational centers are partly deficient. In order to obtain still better results the Government has started sending a few Mexican students to foreign Universities, the Harvard University having been the first one to receive a Mexican boy who is actually making ethnographic and archeological studies. It is something remarkable regarding this student that half the tuition is disbursed by the Mexican Government while the said University disburses the other half.

The United States and Their Knowledge of Latin-America

The foreign diplomatic legations in the countries organized like Latin-America have never, or seldom, got acquainted with the peoples of such countries. They only know a very small group of the leading class, specially the rulers and the politicians.

(1) The author of this article made his anthropological studies in the Columbia University, N. Y.

But the enormous remainder of the anonymous masses, difficult to understand even to their own leaders, remains hidden to the eyes of the foreign diplomatist, hidden and inert, meaningless despite being the quiet seed-bed where originally germinate the fundamental activities and the great motions of the peoples.

The investment of money in the exploitation of an enterprise in any country does not necessarily imply the acquaintance of the foreign investor with such country, and much less his knowledge of the people of that country. At most, he may know the economic aspect of the country as regards similar enterprises to the one in which he is to invest his money, as well as the small group of the population connected with such enterprise.

The religious missionaries sent by foreign churches to our countries know only of the religious aspect of the individuals they come in touch with, and of course they apply the special criterion necessarily derived from their religious creed.

Scientific investigators, as for instance geographers, naturalists, geologists and others, hardly have any opportunity to get acquainted except with very few inhabitants.

Teachers and pedagogues go only so far as knowing the children they educate, which is a very small number in comparison with the total population.

There are two groups of foreigners whose activities should be of great transcendence in regard to the knowledge of our peoples: The first includes the special students of social sciences: psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, ethnographers and linguists; the second one includes the newspapermen, mainly the correspondents of large dailies and reviews. The former are undoubtedly

the ones who know more and better the population, but most unfortunately their knowledge exerts little or no influence in the relations of our countries, as we shall demonstrate afterwards. The knowledge obtained by the newspapermen is much reduced, but it might be larger if they were not—with a few exceptions counted—moulded and identified with the criterion of the editors they represent, who naturally do not know the Latin-Americans.

Let us consider a concrete case, taking for instance the United States as one of those foreign countries we speak of, and one of the Latin American countries say Mexico for instance. On what ground has the United States Government based its official relations and its national feelings toward Mexico? Besides universal principles of international legislation, the State Department at Washington has taken in consideration for its decisions four sources of information: First, the diplomatic reports; second, the consular reports; third, press information, and fourth, private reports.

Let us analyze these four sources of information:

Diplomatic Reports.—President Wilson's arrival to the Presidency of the United States brought about a radical change in the orientation of these reports, which previously were inspired by the exclusive convenience of the United States, whereas later on they have had in view the mutual advantage of that country and Mexico. This new orientation and the happy circumstance of having an honorable, sagacious and highly cultured Ambassador, have determined the late reports to be wholly devoid of the influence of illegitimate interests. Whoever may examine in Mexico or at Washington the difference of the diplomatic dealings of Henry Prather

Fletcher and Henry Lane Wilson will readily understand the lofty spirit of justice and wisdom presiding over the new tendencies of President Wilson's policies. Therefore, the diplomatic reports actually received by the American Government in regard to Mexico are honest, just and dispassionate; but such reports are still one-sided, limited, incomplete, for as I said before, they refer to a minimum part of the population—the leading one—without paying any attention to the majority, and if they ever happen to refer to such majority of the Mexican people, they do so in an empirical manner, because not only the Embassy but even the Mexican leading classes themselves do not know the true nature, the necessities and the ambitions of that majority.

Consular Reports.—The Consular reports are reduced of course to matters of interest between both countries, so that little or nothing do they contain in regard to the complex social problems of Mexico.

Press Information.—The North American press unfriendly to Mexico has always tried to create trouble between both peoples for the immediate purpose of conquest and ulterior purpose of graft and despoil. The friendly press has a great deal to say regarding the prodigious natural resources of Mexico, her artistic beauties and splendid opportunities as a summer or winter resort, and the virtue of her rulers, and all there is in the country that is charming and alluring, but of the **main thing, of the** most important one, although the most difficult to see, the press never says a word—for it could not say anything, since although the editors may have the necessary psychological, anthropological and sociological preparation needed to appreciate the situation such as it is, they cannot apply integrally

and pertinently their knowledge of such matters on account of lacking the **much** needed direct observation of **the great** anonymous masses in whose bosom fundamentally act and re-act the social activities.

Private Reports.—Among private reports the most important ones are those of the capitalists, especially so when the profits of the capital invested decrease or come to naught, because if the economic situation is good then the investors have nothing to report to Washington. It seems useless to say that these reports being inspired—with very few honorable exceptions—by naturally egotistic interests, cannot help the American official mind to grasp a true knowledge of the Mexican people.

Other private informations have weighed very little in the judgment of the State Department.

Now then, can be relations between the United States and Mexico be considered as logical, judicious, just and cordial when they are based on the informations we refer to? We do not think so.

President Wilson, with a wise and clear vision of things and wonderfully humanitarian feelings, from the moment he reached the Presidency has endeavored to amplify and intensify his informations in various ways, and this effort of the American President has given splendid fruits to the ~~American~~ ^{Mexican} Democracy. However, even though such informations offer remarkable characteristics of honesty and altruism, they do not attain the sufficient integral amplitude on account of the above given reasons, and therefore it is useful for the United States, and desirable and convenient for Mexico and the other Latin-American countries, to establish a new orientation to the reports that Washington receives re-

garding the countries to the South, since such reports are intended to be the basis and the ulterior explanation of the character assumed by the relations between Anglo-Saxons and Latin-Americans. By what means are we going to secure such new sources of information as we consider desirable?

Transcendental Reports.—We said before that a select group of **American intellectuals** knows practically and scientifically various aggregations which are representative of the majority of our indigenous and mixed population; we refer to the specialists in social sciences and particularly to anthropologists who have carried out certain investigations in Mexico. These men have not come to Mexico in search of material wealth or official decorations. Their scientific apostleship of a humanitarian nature has consisted in analyzing by the light of the truth the life conditions, the sentiments, the ambitions and tendencies of the humble anonymous Mexican—Indians and mixed—who have been neglected for centuries by former regimes and by the ruling classes, and who live in idleness merely waiting for their long expected redemption. This kind of foreigners (who not only do speak Spanish but even try to acquire a full knowledge of the Indian dialects; who lived for months or years in comfortless huts and ate the “tortilla” and pepper of the humble; who studied and respected the Indians’ creed and superstitions and estimated in their full value the typical usages and customs), are the ones who leave a deep and grateful remembrance in the popular soul, for such men have lived among the poor in terms of disinterested friendship, of true fraternity, of real humility. You may ask the Zapoteca Indians, or the Tarascans, the Huicholes, the Mayas, etc., as well

as the "mestizos" of a great number of places, about Starr, Hrdlicka, Boas, Lumholtz, Tozzer and many others and you shall see how a spontaneous and grateful remembrance is in bloom in all the Indians' hearts.

But if you ask the same people about ranchers, miners, traders, tourists and other Americans who also resided among them, you will see that the Indians do not remember them at all, or if they do, it is with all indifference.

Well, then, the very worthy informations of such investigators regarding social groups which are representative of an enormous majority of the whole nation, where are they? What is the official advantage derived therefrom despite their importance? Have they contributed to improve the relations between both countries? It is saddening to say no. The brilliant studies made by those distinguished scientists in regard to the Mexican population were printed in specialist publications destined to be kept in libraries, museums and other educational centers, and they have given splendid scientific fruits in what concerns the abstract conception of human evolution in our countries and, in general, all over the Continent; but they have exerted little, if any, influence in a practical manner in the policies of the White House concerning the Latin-American peoples, notwithstanding the fact that such wise reports contain the most solid and transcendental bases upon which such policies should be built.

If the State Department at Washington takes in consideration the conclusions arrived at in the works of those sincere investigators, and if in the future the reports of old are accompanied by those furnished by the anthropologists, the sociologists, the ethnographers and other specialists who

study the population of the Latin-American countries, the United States policies in its Pan-American relations shall cease to be empirical and one-sided.

MANUEL GAMIO,

Director of the Anthropological Board.

México, March, 1919.



**Este libro
se imprimió en
los talleres gráficos de la
IMPRENTA NACIONAL, S. A.
Av. Uruguay 41, habiéndose
terminado el día
30 de agosto de
1919.**



